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Address  
Dr. Florence R. Sabin, Chairman  
Health Committee  
Colorado State Post-War Planning Committee  
delivered  
Illinois Statewide Public Health Committee meeting  
Stevens Hotel, Chicago, September 5, 1947

I think no one in your audience this afternoon enjoyed herself as much as I did. I was so astonished at your progress, I had long known of it and my first informant was none other than Dr. Carl Buck. When he was making our survey in Colorado he told of your committee and what you had done and I remember thinking--I wonder if we can follow in <sup>your</sup> these footsteps.

You are five years old. Our law was passed last March so we are just five months old and that is a tremendous gap in age and I beg you to keep it in mind and <sup>do not</sup> don't be surprised at the feebleness of our progress.

Think of the assets that you had. You had, in the first place, a strong public health department and a very able leader. You had, I am told, a Governor who was sympathetic with the idea of public health for your state. You had also, I am told, a Mayor who was favorable to your progress.

We had in Colorado, in the first place, just one of those assets. We had a strong and able man at the head of our health department, Dr. Roy Cleere but ~~he~~ was woefully supported ~~by~~ in the state. He had such an antagonistic government behind him it was almost impossible to do anything.

Our Governor <sup>was uninterested</sup> disliked the idea of public health so he appointed <sup>an</sup> "the old lady" <sup>as chairman of a health committee</sup> because he thought nothing would be done. ~~He appointed her to a post-war planning committee which had one meeting and then I think no more. I might have known as~~

on/ ~~I was a sub-committee, if there was another meeting.~~ He was a passive individual and just didn't want anything changed.

We had a Mayor in the city of Denver, old Ben Stapleton, who was not a passive individual. At the last legislature I was told by one of the senators that old Ben had passed the word down to kill the health bills and they were killed. I have never heard him say why he was against them. He wanted every single appointment for a politician and ~~his head~~ of the so-called Denver Health

*Department* ~~Committee was a man who didn't even rate a number in the~~ *The Denver Director of Health and Charities* telephone directory. ~~He knows nothing about medicine in any~~ of its branches and that is what our city health department was.

Well, we had also another disadvantage. I am amazed at your wealth. You are the seventh state in wealth. We are not a poor state, we are just a little below average, but we had almost nothing to spend for public health. We couldn't spend money for a survey and it was most humiliating to have to ask for an appropriation for a survey by Dr. Carl Buck. We had to have outside money because we had so little interest in public health.

What about our assets? In the first place, defeat stirred people so they were interested to start and then we had the report of Dr. Buck. I was told by one of the civil service commissioners that the report was destined to a bottom drawer in a desk. We got several thousand copies mimeographed. The governor said he never received one but the second report I took with my own hands so I know that he did. <sup>So</sup> Many people <sup>had</sup> saw the report so it was no longer a secret.

The principles you mentioned today <sup>we follow too;</sup> -- we sought <sup>and secured</sup> leadership, we got <sup>a</sup> very strong central executive committee. On this committee we had two senators and one representative, <sup>as well as</sup> very able lawyers, doctors, business men and women. We found one of these members had a ~~very~~ wide acquaintance throughout the state and he told us the people who had leadership in the different areas. We went to them with our reports and asked them to organize their communities. We gave <sup>them</sup> no special instructions, but <sup>all the</sup> we gave them <sup>we had</sup> material and made them quite independent in their organization.

We had one asset which I wish to stress for the moment.

This afternoon the question was brought up: How far does the <sup>support Public Health Service?</sup> medical profession ~~go with this idea?~~ In Colorado we <sup>have the</sup> had one

<sup>medical profession will us</sup> ~~instance that will serve as proof of what the medical profession~~ thinks, that I will tell you about, and that is, the State Medical Society raised its dues to a quite handsome sum to fight for the health services. How was this won? By the freest and frankest ~~and open discussions in some of the county meetings.~~ <sup>our common problems -</sup>

At one meeting, in order to get the discussions going, a leader asked "What are the legitimate functions of a health department?

What can a health department do to establish an immunization program?" A doctor quickly arose and said " I knew what this

was about, its nothing but socialized medicine." The ~~health~~ <sup>County</sup> commissioner addressed him saying: "Now Jack, you <sup>have</sup> just ~~came~~ <sup>come</sup> into this meeting and I urge you to listen before forming an opinion. I have listened to the whole story and in my opinion

this is what you ought to back as a buffer against socialized medicine. " ~~This is the answer. I think you should know the whole of history.~~ "

I remember in the early days when we first trained public health officers back in 1917, many of them came back and said the doctors don't want to have the reporting of tuberculosis and you see how it came about, but that has gone and with us now the doctors are proud of this specialty within their profession and when they cease to say "your bills" and instead say "our bills" we knew that the idea had been won.

No biological reaction is ever 100% and there is an occasional doctor in Colorado who is fighting us. One doctor, in answer to another doctor who was fighting the organization of county public health units, said: "If we can clean up the islands in the Pacific, why not a city in Colorado?"

Now I want to speak of the methods that we used. At each county meeting, and first I will say we had to organize the first few county meetings since our counties are small we made them all district meetings inviting people from adjacent counties. The first meetings were conducted by Dr. Buck and myself and then we secured a very efficient executive secretary who knew the state of Colorado like a book who organized the next few meetings. After that we have not organized meetings only on invitation of the people themselves, the PTA, AAUW, all women's clubs, Kiwanis, Lions clubs, in fact all men's clubs, and we have had so many invitations some of us have spoken three and four times a day.

There is one fundamental point and that is the nature of the subject matter. We have found it advisable to take to the people their own local problems. Dr. Cleere usually took problems from the record showing what their water or sewage disposal deficiencies were; to give you one example: a woman physician came to the office and asked us to come up and give a talk on milk as their mayor would not allow pasteurized milk in the town. We went there and talked about the value of pasteurized milk.

In another town the women wouldn't use fresh milk at all because there was so much dirt in it. *From this town* In ~~one~~ county we had a prominent club woman *go to another town to* ~~to come and~~ see the whole process from the cow to the pasteurizing plant. *the first town* Now it has two dairies that send in pasteurized milk and the dairies are now building their own pasteurizing plants.

*the common problem of getting* We ask people to study their local problems, *and then help on* ~~to get~~ the health laws through. Our laws went through with a good deal of ease. They were prepared in advance, passed early in the session with relatively little opposition, ~~the state health department setting up strong laws.~~

Our county health bill differs from yours in that it is permissive legislation allowing county and multiple county units *to form* on vote of the county commissioner. If it is a single county unit, the commissioners appoint a board of members of 5, while a multiple county unit has a board of 7 members.

We were allowed \$150,000 to start county units. When we started there were just 4 of our 63 counties that had health units and they had been supported because we had a strong friend of public health in Dr. Fred Ford. Everyone knows of Dr. Fred Ford in U. S. Public Health Service. He allotted some

Federal funds to help our county build up their units. Now we have this small sum from the State.

How is that being spent? Now I come to the crux of our story. What is our method of getting our message across to the people themselves? We are using the method of demonstration. In the first place the county health nurse, ~~she~~ is a key person in the program. We had had county health nurses, probably just one per county, ~~but a county health nurse~~, and we had 18 counties with a county health nurse. Where she has been it is easy to make people see what can be accomplished. I like to stress this point because I think nurses in public health have won for themselves what nurses in private work have yet to win. ~~for themselves.~~ The nurses in public health has prestige and the full backing of the public health officers. They want them to be well educated. I happen to be on a hospital board where ~~I fought to have nurses of a good educational background.~~  
*The health services* <sup>want</sup> They/women with judgment, with force, with character, women who can work quite independently. There is some difference in the extent of the duties where a public health nurse has no medical supervision, without a nurse, without a doctor, without hospital equipment. It is a great deal better when she works under direct medical officers.

In our last election, the county where there had been just one nurse, every single county commissioner voted for the unit; in the adjacent county, the commissioners were fairly favorable, but ~~where~~ <sup>and</sup> they never had a nurse, it was not favorably received.

Our problem is different from yours. You have fairly uniform land where we have exceedingly different types. We have mountains, plains, prairies, dry country, cattle ranges, fruit farming and mining.

We can't organize many units. As I told you we are only five months old. We have organized two districts, two units in our five weeks of age. The idea of demonstration was thought out by Dr. Cleere, to let the people see what can be done by the county health department. We have divided the state into seven temporary sanitary districts.

It is planned that we send the entire staff into a district for two weeks, a sanitary engineer, a sanitarian and a public health nurse, to make a survey of every town it, the farms too, as far as possible. Now this is a big order for just two weeks. This staff would then report to the people themselves on the condition of the water supply, sewage disposal, restaurants, barber shops, milk supply, farms and dairies, and then leave one sanitarian to go on educating the people.

*working* This plan has been extremely well received. Dr. Cleere is on his third district, ~~and the first was the first one to~~<sup>is</sup> organize and the people were very much enthused. We have also taken all the public health data we knew for open and frequent discussion among the people.

I want to take up just one subject which interests me very much. It is the subject of sanitation of milk. We have had widespread Bangs disease, lots of brucellosis, and we tried to put through a bill to prevent the sale of cows that had been tested and reaction showed they had Bangs disease. Our bill was

killed by the livestock people. It was referred to the livestock commission who killed the bill. There was nothing we could do about it. I think your defeats are more interesting because you learn more about things. There is a Chinese proverb "Woe unto him who has never been defeated - - -"

I think we should take a look at this problem not only from the standpoint of health but from the standpoint of economics. There is one point that is quite complicated and I think it is a problem that should be studied not just by us but by all the American people. <sup>There are</sup> ~~We have~~ three groups that deal with cows. <sup>those who own</sup> ~~There are~~ the <sup>the range cattle</sup> range cattle; <sup>that</sup> ~~that~~ are sold to feeders who give them grain before they go to market. <sup>then</sup> Then there is the dairy industry ~~which is worth about \$35,000,000, and we had won them~~ <sup>so that</sup> over after a long fight ~~and they were for this bill which was~~ <sup>which</sup> killed by the livestock people. The livestock industry <sup>in our state</sup> is worth \$175,000,000 as against \$35,000,000 in the dairy industry.

- - - <sup>estimated</sup> ~~estimating~~ the amount of milk that a cow loses with Bang's disease is 265 pounds. ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> milk per year is quite a loss of food at a time when food is the most important problem in the world. (a comparison was made between Michigan and Colorado in the loss of milk and beef)

We lost 37 million pounds in Colorado. The livestock people lost <sup>thousand</sup> less, the loss in Michigan was 16 ~~million~~ pounds. - - -

If we lose a million pounds of beef a year, at the price of meat on the hoof, that represents quite a large sum.



Now the American people are getting public health minded. ~~From the health standpoint of the number of children fed with the milk and the number of adults fed with the beef,~~ but I am speaking in the terms of money loss to the livestock industry. You can understand why they would not be for us.

A problem came to my mind today when Dr. Lindstrom spoke of poor lands, small farms and large families. It shocked me to know you had any poor land in Illinois. The livestock problem is this; and I think it is extremely important. The land for livestock is over-grazed in Colorado. It is largely public lands and definitely over-grazed. Loss doesn't amount to anything, already enough cattle per land and that is the economic problem that should be presented to the American people and that is the thing we want to make as their own problem.

~~XXXXXXXX~~ We were helped by our polio epidemic. The epidemic had frightened the people. We made no pretence that the medical profession conquered polio but told of research and that is fundamentally what helped in waking people up to this problem. In 1900 I happened to be present at some of the discussions of a group of doctors, Dr. Welch and Dr. Gibbs were there, and their discussions all centered around this problem.

When the campaign was first started against tuberculosis, those incharge wondered if the public could become interested in a disease and they decided to put it to a test. There was in Baltimore an exhibit that ran all day and evening for a week and the people responded. The answer was that people are fundamentally interested in the problem of medicine and that is the real basis of the work in public health.

You have accomplished much, we have not accomplished much in our short existence. We do have a new Governor. We also have a new Mayor and that is a miracle <sup>but</sup> nobody dreamed that our old Mayor would be defeated. He didn't win even one precinct, and he had been in power for twenty-five years. The new Mayor is energetic and interested in public health and a miracle has happened in the city of Denver health department. In these few weeks since the Mayor has been elected more had been done to clean up the city of Denver than in the last fifty years. We haven't accomplished nearly as much as you have but we are on our way.